

MISSOURI CONSERVATIONIST

September
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Serving Nature & You



Vantage Point

Community Forests

Together, the trees in and around a community make up what we call a community forest. These community forests require management to achieve their maximum benefit.

When trees are properly cared for, they contribute to a community and become a valuable part of its infrastructure. A managed, healthy community forest can cut heating and cooling costs, reduce stormwater runoff, increase property values and minimize air pollution. Managed community forests also better withstand insect and disease problems and major weather events.

Even though the benefits of a healthy community forest have been proven, a recent survey of public officials in Missouri showed that many communities do not budget for tree care.

Surveys also show that most Missourians want trees on streets and in parks and want to lose fewer trees during development. They also supported the Missouri Department of Conservation's efforts to help communities include trees and green spaces in housing, business and shopping developments.

Time, money and interest are often in short supply when it comes to managing publicly owned trees. The Missouri Department of Conservation can help communities properly manage their green infrastructure by providing foresters to help train community employees on proper planting, pruning and care of trees. Foresters also can help select trees most suitable for planting spaces and identify priority maintenance needs, including trees that present a risk to the public.

In addition, the Tree Resource Improvement and Maintenance (TRIM) cost-share program provides funding on a competitive basis to help communities care for their trees. An average of 40 projects each year returns about \$250,000 to Missouri communities.

For example, working from a plan developed by the Conservation Department and funded through TRIM, Saline County removed several trees, planted new ones and conducted two educational workshops in partnership with Saline County University of Missouri Extension office.

Describing the TRIM project, Saline County Presiding Commissioner Becky Plattner, said, "We've been reminded that we like to work together and that people coming together to solve problems and build on strength is powerful. The positive outcomes extend beyond trees."



CLIFF WHITE

The Conservation Department also values forming partnerships with other organizations. A growing number of communities are investing time and energy in caring for their forests in hopes of being certified by The National Arbor Day Foundation as a Tree City USA community.

Partnership with the U.S. Forest Service's State and Private Forestry organization enhances the Department's ability to provide technical assistance. Partner support also makes available workshops like the recent Storm Preparedness and Response training held in Kirkwood and Hannibal.

The Conservation Department's community forestry program is working to help cities and towns address their tree care needs. Through partnerships, we can have healthy community forests that provide benefits to Missourians today, tomorrow and for generations to come.

Robert L. Krepps, Forestry Division Administrator

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SAD AT HOME

We lived in Missouri from 1984 to 2004 and regretfully have moved “back home.” We totally fell in love with Missouri and have left our children there so we’ll have ample reason to visit often.

What a treat when we discovered the *Missouri Conservationist* was free just for living there. We’ve been gone since July and are starving for some good reading and wonderful pictures, so please hurry along our paid subscription.

We have moved to a state where it seems the conservation cabinet is almost nonexistent. They don’t have the funds to put their organization out there for the public to be aware of and consequently they won’t make gains.

Mike & Rita McGuire, Bowling Green, Ken.

FISH TALE

Your article on redear sunfish talked about the dogged run of a pound-and-a-half fish. I believe that’s a fish story. I

have caught large redears in Arkansas, but none were one and a half pounds. When it comes to telling fish stories, the first liar doesn’t stand a chance.

Charles Hayden, Stover

Editor’s note: The current state record redear sunfish weighed 2 pounds, 7 ounces. It was caught by Glenda Gollaher of Overland. (See reader’s photo, below.) The minimum size for a Missouri Master Angler Award for redear sunfish is 1 pound or 10 inches. The Department issued 15 Master Angler awards for redear sunfish in 2004. The largest of these weighed 1 pound, 13 ounces.

CONNUBIAL BLISS

I enjoyed “Hunting and Fishing Partners—and Married!” My husband and I have been fishing and hunting partners (bow and gun) since 1980.

Terrie A. Wellman, Warrensburg



RECORD REDEAR

Tom Simpkin of Overland sent in this photo of the state record redear sunfish caught by Glenda Gollaher. He said Glenda has passed away, but she would have been happy to know she still holds the record. “Glenda was very proud of that fish,” he said.

My husband and I are blessed to have Trent and Deb Lorraine, who were featured in your “Hunting and Fishing Partners” article as neighbors. We don’t hunt, but they hunt on our property. Sometimes their three young girls join them.

It’s a good arrangement. They not only tell us their hunting stories, but they also serve as our eyes and ears to tell us what is happening on our property.

One year, Deb set the record for the largest deer taken by a women in Andrew County. She had her proud husband and girls at her side to share that honor.

Bruce and Rocky Clouse, Amazonia

RINGING ENDORSEMENT

I just wanted to let you and Sherry Fisher know how much I enjoyed her article on flood plains. It makes the issues of damming and leveeing as clear as a bell.

Clay Shannon, Oconomowoc, Wis.

BIGGER IS BETTER

While in Van Buren, my wife and I went fishing on the Current River, and I caught a smallmouth bass that measured 18 inches and weighed approximately 4 pounds.

When I returned home that evening, I opened your August issue and came across the “Night-Float Smallmouth” article. It said that smallmouth ranging between 8 and 11 inches were typical in most Ozark streams, and bigger smallmouth are rare. After reading this, I am thrilled to share my “rare” experience on an Ozark stream.

Tony Welker, via Internet

TAIL SECTION

My knowledge of possums is very limited, but when I saw my first one in our fencerow in Purdin, it was hanging by its tail from a small tree. If he couldn’t do that, as your article said, nobody ever told him.

Bruce Moffitt, Brookfield

Editor's reply: A young possum may hang by its prehensile tail, but an adult is too heavy to hang that way. Adults, however, may use their tail to hang temporarily while descending through branches.

CATFISH CONUNDRUM

I recently saw a photo of a catfish caught in Thailand that weighed 646 pounds. I was thinking that the current world record was a catfish caught in West Alton that weighed 124 pounds. I guess that's been shattered now.

Jim Snyder, Bowling Green

Editor's note: The catfish recently net-

ted in Thailand was a Mekong giant catfish, a species we don't have here. The 124-pound fish caught near West Alton was a world-record blue catfish.

STING SOLUTION

Thanks for the tips on poison ivy. I have one for you: For bee, wasp or hornet stings, wet a stick match and rub it over the sting.

I got to experience the "cure" when a wasp got into the pickup cab with me. I wet two matches with saliva and applied them to the sting. It quit hurting immediately.

Lighters won't work. Ha! Ha!

Blanche Ross, Springfield

The letters printed here reflect readers' opinions about the Conservationist and its contents. Space limitations prevent us from printing all letters, but we welcome signed comments from our readers. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Ask the Ombudsman



Q: After a recent outdoor event we noticed we had a number of bites but we never noticed any bugs where we were. Did we get into no-see-ums or are these chiggers?

A: During the late summer the Conservation Department receives occasional reports of people receiving bites from unseen critters that apparently are not chiggers.

Numerous welts develop after outdoor activities, often after raking oak leaves, especially pin oak leaves. No pain is felt at the time of the bite.

The culprit in most cases appears to be a predatory mite known appropriately as an "itch mite." These mites are feeding on midge larvae that inhabit oak leaf galls. The mites feed primarily on various insects, but will bite humans. Cool summers may increase survival of both gall insects and itch mites. Mites will become inactive or less of a problem after a hard frost. Entomologists originally thought this mite was the straw itch mite (*Pyemotes tritici*), well known for its biting of humans, but a later report indicates that at least some of these mites are a new exotic species from central Europe (*Pyemotes herfsi*).

Recommendations for avoiding bites include using DEET repellents, as well as changing clothing and taking a hot soapy shower after outdoors activities, especially if you were around oak leaves.

Ombudsman Ken Drenon will respond to your questions, suggestions or complaints concerning Conservation Department programs. Write him at P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180, call him at 573/522-4115, ext. 3848, or e-mail him at Ken.drenon@mdc.mo.gov.

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From Field to Freezer

Save money and ensure the quality of your venison by processing your own deer.

by Greg Hanzlick, photos by Cliff White

Harvest more does! is the advice of many state game and fish agencies, including the Missouri Department of Conservation.

At public meetings, Conservation Department staff field questions about proposed deer hunting regulations and deer herd management. One subject discussed repeatedly is the harvest of more does.

Many people say they would like to take additional animals, but also said they cannot afford processing fees that typically range from \$60 to \$75 per deer. That wouldn't be a limitation if people knew how to process their own deer.

Save bucks by cutting up the family's deer yourselves.





For more than a decade, my family has processed all the deer we take—usually three to five deer a year. Through trial and error, we created a process that results in quality meat for the whole family. It takes a little time, but we look at it as a satisfying final chapter to our hunts.

The first step in processing and packaging deer is assembling the proper tools. You will need:

- * Two sharp knives and a sharpener to touch them up during processing. I recommend a boning knife and a flexible 6- to 8-inch filet knife.
- * A spacious work area and cutting board that have been disinfected with bleach. You also should disinfect your hands and the tools you use to avoid contaminating the meat.
- * A compact or professional bone saw. If you plan to make burger, you'll also need a meat grinder—either hand-cranked or electric.

Now, assuming you've field-dressed and skinned your deer and have it hanging by its head, you are ready to begin.

First, remove the legs at the knee joints with a bone saw. Then take a moment to study the deer and the individual muscle groups.

With the back of the deer facing you, locate the coveted “back straps.” These are about as thick as your wrist, and run on either side of the spine from just behind the front shoulders to just in front of the hips.

Using the boning knife, cut slowly on either side of the spine, “feeling” the bone with the knife as you go down the length of each strap. Next, cut on each side to liberate the straps from the ribs. At this point, you should be able to remove each one with a minimum of cutting.

Use the filet knife to remove the translucent blue membrane and fat from the meat. This will keep it from

Good tools make good meat

Companies that offer meat processing supplies include: LEM Products Inc., www.lemproducts.com, 877/536-7763; The Sausage Maker, 716/876-5521; Cabela's, www.cabelas.com, 800/237-4444; and Bass Pro Shops, www.basspro.com, 800/Basspro.



Keep your tools sharp and your workplace sanitary for the best results.

becoming tough and developing a strong taste. Cut across the grain of the meat to make ½- to ¾-inch-thick medallions from each strap.

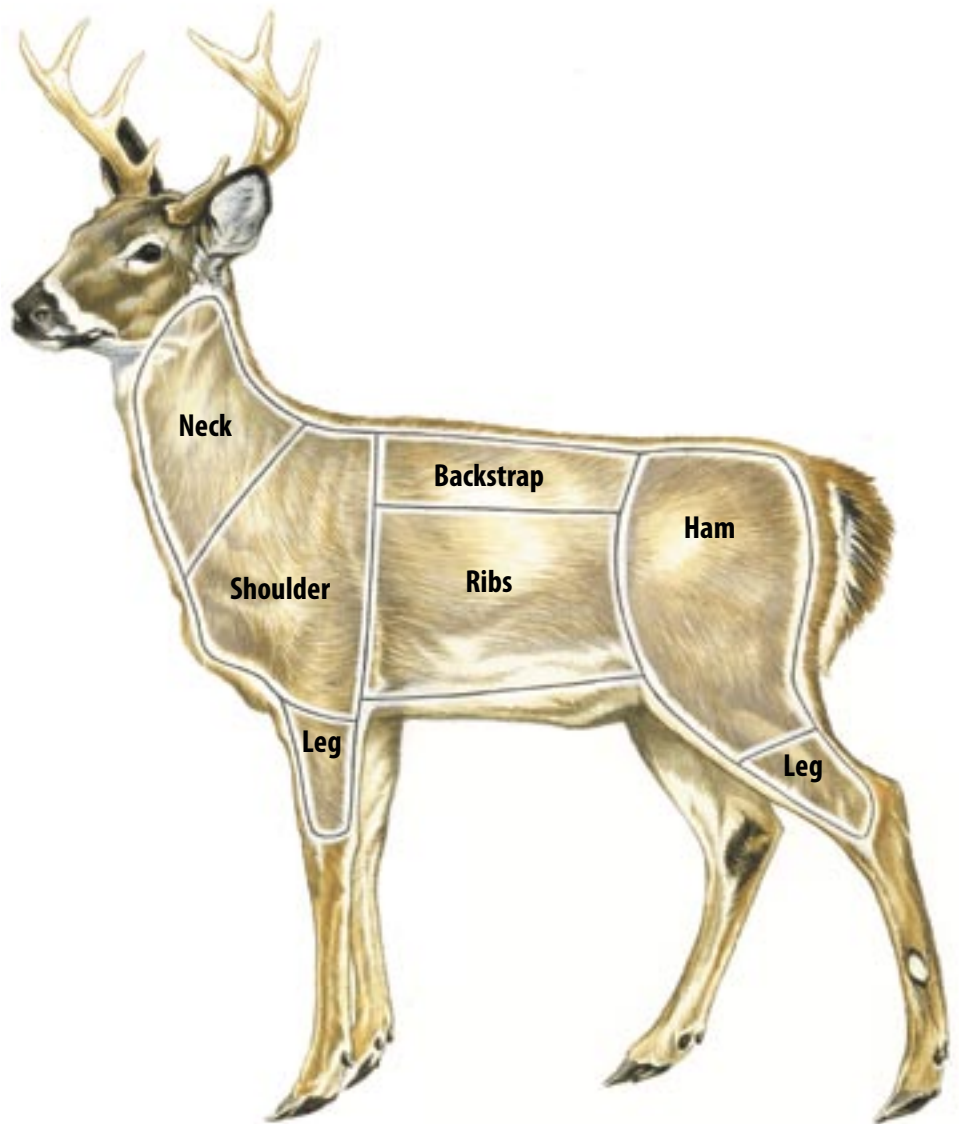
Move each front leg up and down to locate the point of attachment at the shoulder. Remove at this joint. Most of the shoulder meat can be sectioned off and used for burger, but remember to remove the blue membrane and fat. The rest of the leg meat can be pressure-cooked off the bone to be used as soup stock.

Remove the hams, using the bone saw to cut them apart and then separate them from the spine. De-bone the hams by cutting down to and along the bone with the filet knife, cutting the meat away until the bone can be removed.

You can then separate the muscle clusters into individual roasts, cut them across the grain into round steaks, or cut into 1-inch cubes to grind to burger.

Now look inside the body cavity to locate the “mini-straps.” These are just below the hips on either side of the spine. Remove them just as you did the back straps.

Use the bone saw to cut out the ribs, or use the filet knife to cut the meat from between each rib for the burger pile. You also can use the bone saw to remove the neck roast from just above the shoulders to just below the lower jaw.



The only thing left to do is look the carcass over for any good pieces of meat that can be salvaged for the burger pile. The burger meat should be cut into 1- to 1 ½-inch cubes. This size cube should feed easily through the grinder.

No matter how you cut up your deer, remember to remove as much of the translucent blue membrane and fat as you can.

You can package meat in a number of ways to avoid freezer burn. The simplest way is to double-bag it in zip-per-type freezer bags, removing as much air as possible from the bags before sealing. Another is to wrap the meat first in plastic wrap, then in butcher paper. We use a vacuum sealer that sucks the air from the plastic bag and heat seals the package.

If you take care of your meat and pride in your work, you will enjoy the satisfaction of providing lean, nutritious meat for your family—from field to freezer. ▲

Share the Harvest

The Conservation Federation of Missouri and its partners will reimburse processors \$35 to process a whole deer donated to the Share the Harvest venison donation program.

Hunters who donate an entire deer will complete a voucher provided by their processor. The hunter's bill is automatically reduced by \$35. At the end of the season, processors will send vouchers to the Conservation Federation office for reimbursement.

Additional funds, which may be available from local sources, can further reduce processing cost. Contact your local processor for more information.



The levees holding back
our big rivers create
strips of wilderness.

by Rod Doolen, photos by Jim Rathert

Batture LANDS



It was mid afternoon on a clear, crisp December day. We topped the levee and looked east. A half mile away, four deer grazed in an open field leading to a tall wall of forest.

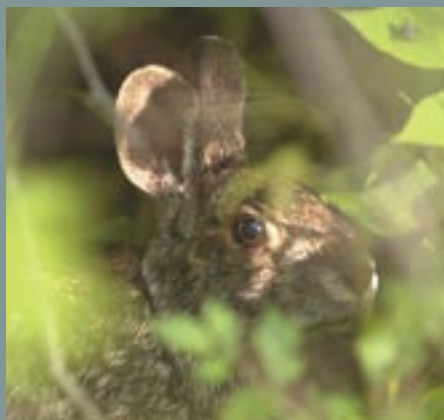
We were entering batture lands, which are defined as the alluvial land between a river (especially the lower Mississippi) at low-water stage and a levee.



White-tailed deer



Interior least tern



Swamp rabbit

Undeveloped lands next to big rivers flood often, but wildlife finds them attractive.

The lower Mississippi River technically begins at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. However, the term batture is commonly applied to this type of land near other rivers.

In southeast Missouri, there are 190 miles of batture lands between Cape Girardeau and the Arkansas state line. These floodplain lands, found between the low water level of the Mississippi and the levees, contain about 127,000 acres.

One hundred twenty-six of these miles are below the confluence with the Ohio and contain about 106,000 acres.

Few people live in this large expanse of land. If you visit batture lands you'll find a wild mix of sand and gravel bars, old oxbows, blowout holes, older forests, young forests and cropland. Along with these features exists a wide variety of wildlife, including many migrating species of birds.

Batture lands are subject to the whims of the river. Water-level fluctuations—including floods—in these lands have become more pronounced the last several decades as new levee systems have been added and old levees have been raised. As levees constrict the rivers, flood waters are trapped in smaller and smaller areas.

About 35 percent of batture land is farmland, and 62 percent is bottomland forest. The remaining 3 percent includes roads, sand bars and miscellaneous structures or natural sand-and-gravel deposits away from the river.

The width of batture lands varies considerably. In some locations, the levee is adjacent to the river, but there are places along the Missouri side of the river where the levees are four miles from the river. Visiting these wide stretches of batture land brings a sense of true wilderness.

After watching the deer for a while, we drove down the levee toward a small pool of water in the corner of a large field. It was at the end of a 75-foot-wide line of trees that runs parallel to the levee.

Ducks regularly use this small pool. We threw out a few decoys, lay on the ground and covered ourselves with camouflage.

The afternoon passed without any duck visitors, but various other birds flew across our wide field of vision. Finally, a flock of ducks shot by like a fast flying squadron. They surveyed the pool but were out of range. We couldn't call them closer.

Still, it was a fine day to be outside, enjoying a pristine afternoon and the company of my son and my friend. We picked up decoys and headed out of Missouri's batture lands, grateful for the opportunity to visit an untamed landscape. ▲





Northern pintails



Green treefrog

VISITING BATTURE LANDS

Fall and winter are great times to visit batture lands because mosquitoes are gone and migrating waterfowl are plentiful. A good way to visit the lands is by boat. The Conservation Department has several accesses to the Mississippi River, as well as conservation areas that contain batture land habitat. The facilities are in Mississippi, New Madrid and Pemiscot counties. Many of these areas are open to fishing, camping, hunting and trapping.

Mississippi County

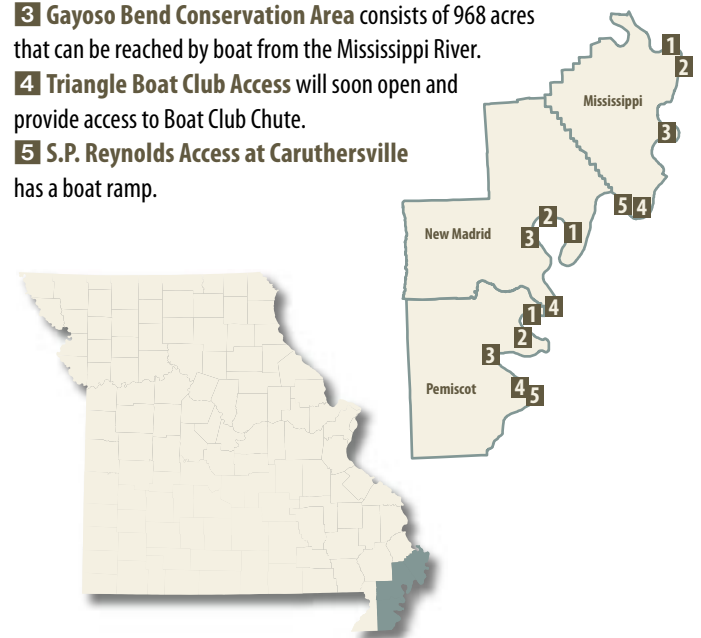
- 1 Bird's Blue Hole Access** has 77 acres with a boat ramp and a 27-acre fishable lake.
- 2 Joseph Hunter Moore Access** has 10 acres with a boat ramp.
- 3 Thirty-Four Corner Blue Hole** has 30 acres with a boat ramp and a nine-acre fishable lake.
- 4 Seven Island Access** has two acres with a boat ramp.
- 5 Seven Island Conservation Area** consists of 1,376 acres of forest, cropland and wetlands. It has two fishable lakes and is home to swamp rabbits and nesting Mississippi kites.

New Madrid County

- 1 Donaldson Point Conservation Area** consists of 5,785 mostly forested acres. The area has four fishable lakes and ponds.
- 2 St. John's Bayou Access** has four acres and provides bank-fishing opportunities.
- 3 New Madrid Bend Access** has seven acres with a boat ramp.
- 4 John L. and Georgia Girvin Memorial Conservation Area** consists of 748 acres of bottomland hardwood forest.

Pemiscot County

- 1 Twin Borrow Pits Conservation Area** consists of 20 acres with two small fishable lakes.
- 2 Wolf Bayou Conservation Area** consists of 276 acres and includes Wolf Bayou (an old channel of 43 fishable acres and a boat ramp into the bayou) and Wolf Bayou Natural Area.
- 3 Gayoso Bend Conservation Area** consists of 968 acres that can be reached by boat from the Mississippi River.
- 4 Triangle Boat Club Access** will soon open and provide access to Boat Club Chute.
- 5 S.P. Reynolds Access at Caruthersville** has a boat ramp.





Clockwise from left, a male house finch, a female American goldfinch and a male American goldfinch eat niger seed.

Birds are well-known and appreciated in Missouri. About four in every five residents feed wild birds, and one in four is willing to travel to watch them.

Lots of people contact the Department of Conservation to ask questions about birds. Here are the answers to 10 of the most frequently asked questions.



Cape May warbler

How

About



Bewick's wren

Those



Painted bunting

Birds?

Frequently asked questions about birds and birdfeeding.

by Andrew Forbes, photos by Jim Rathert



Conservation efforts helped bald eagles return.

Q: How are bald eagles doing in Missouri?

A: The bald eagle has rebounded nationwide as a result of the banning of the insecticide known as DDT and the success of reintroduction programs, such as the one undertaken by the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) and other partners in Missouri during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Missouri boasts one of the highest wintering bald eagle populations in the lower 48 states. Usually, more than 2,200 eagles are encountered during our annual winter waterfowl and eagle surveys. In the winter, they can be found along any large, open body of water, where they feed mostly on dead fish.

We also have a breeding population of bald eagles. Roughly 75 to 100 pairs nest in Missouri, and the number grows every year.

MDC tracks bald eagle nests in Missouri. If you find a bald eagle nest in your area, please report it to us by calling 573/751-4115.

Q: I have a hawk that regularly hunts at my bird feeder. What is it?

A: Two species of hawks, the Cooper's hawk and the sharp-shinned hawk, commonly hunt birds at backyard bird feeders.

The two species closely resemble one another. Adults of both species have dark, grayish-blue backs with red barring on the belly, while immatures have brown backs with brown streaking underneath. They are longer and more slender than other hawks. This adaptation allows them to maneuver through tight spaces in pursuit of other birds. Cooper's hawks usually are larger, tend to have larger, darker heads and more rounded tails, and are more common than sharp-shinned hawks.

Many people enjoy having hawks around and view them as just another backyard bird. The number of birds killed by hawks is low, and the presence of hawks should not keep birds from visiting your feeder.

If you prefer to discourage hawks, temporarily remove the feeder and they may leave the area. Never poison, shoot or trap hawks, as this is a violation of both federal and state laws.

Q: What impact is West Nile Virus having on birds?

A: West Nile Virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne virus that was first identified in New York City in 1999. Since then, it has spread to almost all the lower 48 states.

WNV is carried by birds and transmitted by mosquitoes that have fed on infected birds. Members of the crow family, such as American crows and blue jays, seem to be the most likely to die from WNV. However, some individuals may carry the virus and show no symptoms.

We do not yet know the full implications of WNV for birds, though some localized population declines have been documented. Species with larger populations and those that have more young are more likely to rebound.

Data collected from Great Britain suggests that bird populations there have built up immunity to a similar virus over time. Perhaps our birds will develop some



Many people enjoy seeing hawks, like this Cooper's hawk.



Leaving feeders out into fall won't keep hummingbirds from migrating, and may nourish late travelers.

immunity to WNV. However, we won't know the full impact on birds for some time.

For more information on WNV, visit www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm.

Q: I found a baby bird on the ground. What should I do?

A: The best thing to do is to leave the bird alone. It likely is a fledgling that is learning how to fly. Although the bird may look stranded, in most cases it should soon make a wobbly flight.

It is always best not to interfere, though you should keep pets and children away from the bird. If you must move it, use gloves and relocate it to a nearby shrub or thick patch of weeds.

Q: What is the best food for hummingbirds and how long should I feed them?

A: Several varieties of hummingbird food are available at most large grocery stores. You also can make your own hummingbird food by adding

one part sugar to four to five parts water and bringing it to a boil. Red food coloring is unnecessary. Let the mixture cool before putting it in your feeder, and refrigerate any extra for future use.

It is best to place your feeder at least 6 feet off the ground in an open but not too sunny spot. Clean it every few days with a diluted bleach solution to kill mold.

You also can attract hummingbirds by planting trumpet creeper, royal catchfly or other native plants with red flowers.

Ruby-throated hummingbirds begin to arrive in Missouri each year between mid and late April and typically begin to depart in early October. By mid-October, most hummingbirds are gone from Missouri. If you choose to keep your feeder up longer, you may attract rare, late visitors, such as rufous hummingbirds.



It's best to leave baby birds alone.

Q: A bird is attacking my window. How can I stop it?

A: Northern cardinals and northern mockingbirds often attack their reflection in windows, especially during the summer months when they are most territorial. This behavior can be annoying, but is usually easy to stop.

You can break up the reflection by placing an opaque, nontoxic substance on the outside of the window (fake “snow,” newspaper, etc.). Or, place balloons, streamers, wind chimes or other flashy objects near the window to scare off birds. A sprinkler close to the window also may deter birds.

Q: What are the best foods to feed birds?

A: Black, oil-type sunflower seed attracts a wide variety of birds to your feeder. Providing niger seed (also known as thistle) helps draw in finches. Put up a suet cage to attract woodpeckers and other insect-eating species. In spring and summer, you may attract Baltimore orioles to your feeder by putting out halves of citrus fruit.



A Baltimore oriole is a fine catch for bird watchers.



Cats are predators. Hungry or not, they will hunt birds.

Bird species have different methods of feeding. Some prefer to feed on the ground, while others prefer to forage in trees. Be sure to provide food at multiple levels to attract a maximum variety of birds.

Keep in mind that if you feed birds, you'll usually feed squirrels as well. Some folks enjoy their antics, but others do not appreciate their large appetites and sometimes surly behavior. Squirrels are clever and often find their way into supposedly squirrel-proof feeders. If squirrels are a problem, try switching to safflower seed. Squirrels do not seem to like it as well.

Q: What can I do to help birds?

A: 1) Keep your cat indoors and encourage your neighbors to do likewise. Cats kill a lot of birds every year, and putting a bell on their collar or declawing them does not significantly lessen their hunting success. Visit www.abcbirds.org/cats/ to find out more.

2) Drink certified shade-grown coffee. Growing methods for shade-grown coffee provide better habitat for Missouri birds wintering in Central and South America than newer full-sun, row-crop methods. If your grocery store doesn't carry shade-grown coffee, ask for it. Many brands are available online.

3) Support local bird conservation initiatives and join organizations that work to further bird conservation.

Q: Where are some good places to see birds in Missouri?

A: More than 400 species of birds have been documented in Missouri, and we are fortunate to have lots of great places to see them.

The online Missouri Conservation Atlas (www.missouriconservation.org/atlas/) provides directions



Black-oil sunflower seeds attract lots of bird species. Messy eaters help ground-feeding species by scattering seed.

and area descriptions of MDC areas throughout the state. Many of these areas offer birding opportunities. “A Guide to Birding in Missouri,” published by the Audubon Society of Missouri, also offers detailed directions and site descriptions for some of the best birding areas.

Q: I have a sick or injured bird at my feeder. What should I do?

A: Disease and weather take their toll on birds so it's not unusual to find a sick, injured or dead bird at your feeder. However, finding more than a few at once could be cause for concern.

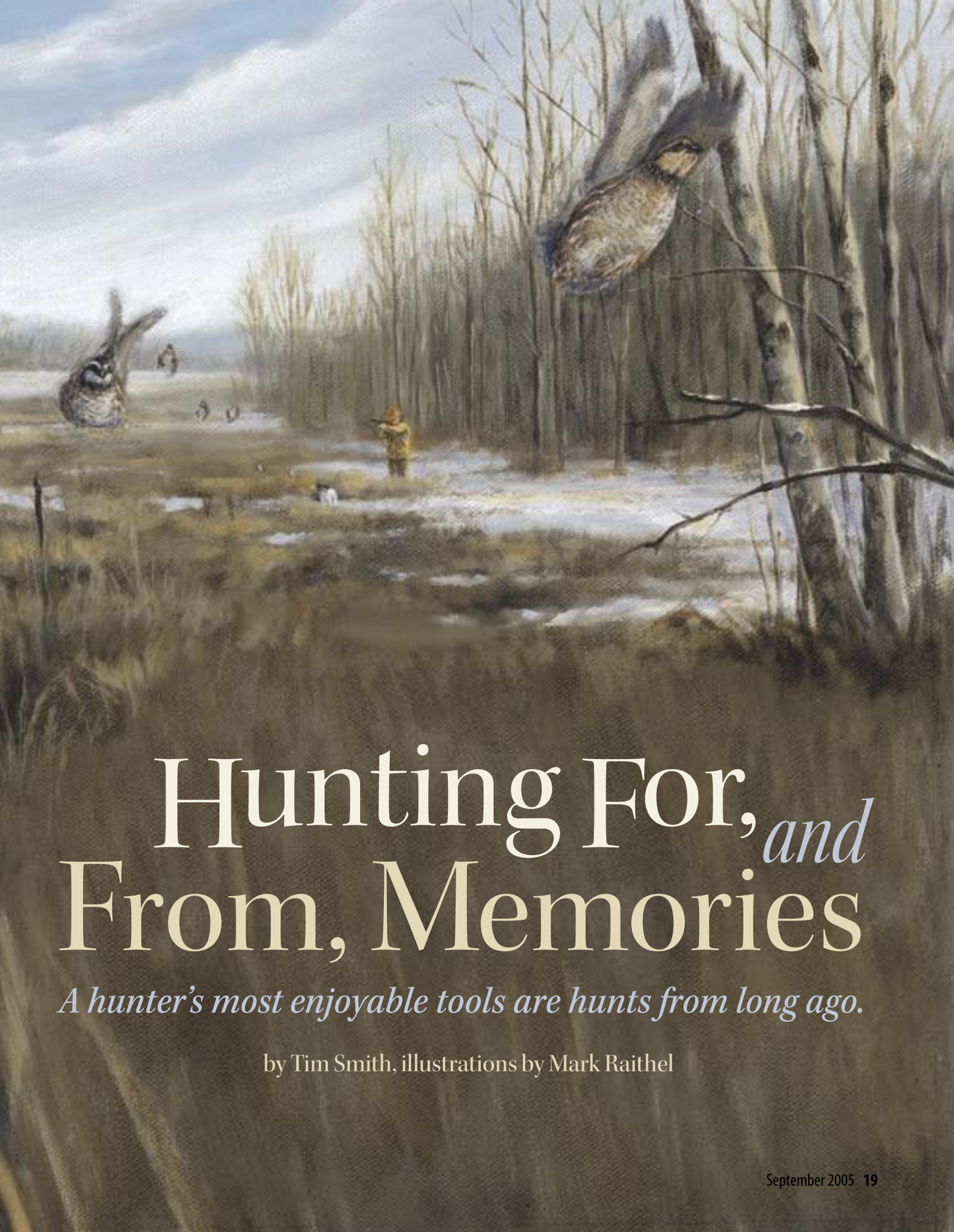
Make sure your seed is not spoiled and store it in

a dry place in a sealed container. Don't let piles of old seed hulls accumulate under your feeder. This is unsanitary and can attract rodents. Clean your feeder regularly using a diluted bleach solution.

Chemicals used for lawn care also may be killing the birds. Be sure you water the chemicals well into your lawn if you use them.

Birds that fly into windows are often just stunned and need a little time to recover before they can fly off on their own. Again, make sure you keep pets and children away from the bird. If you have an injured bird that is not recovering (broken wing, etc.) and that you want to help, contact your local veterinarian and ask them about licensed wildlife rehabilitators in your area. ▲





Hunting For, *and* From, Memories

A hunter's most enjoyable tools are hunts from long ago.

by Tim Smith, illustrations by Mark Raithel

The two flushed bobwhite quail veered away from me in the weedy alley between rows of young cottonwoods—one to my right and the other straight ahead.

The bird on the right was the first to get airborne, so I swung on it and fired as my shotgun barrel caught up with its flight path. As it crumpled into the tall Johnson grass, I quickly aimed at the second. It was in my sights before my conscious mind caught up with my instinct, and I lowered the gun and pushed the safety back on. I had my limit; that second bird would have to wait for another day.

It was a memorable hunt. There haven't been many times when I have shot a limit of quail, so those days stand out more than most. But I have countless other bird-hunting memories, many of which are nearly as vivid today as they were decades ago.

While I can pull up to an ATM and not remember the four-digit PIN number I used a few days before, I can recall for years the exact spots where I flushed a pheasant or a covey of quail. I know which way they flew and whether or not I made my shots.

Mingled with these details are the feel and heft of the shotgun, the sight of my dog bringing me a bird, the look of the brown and gray landscape, the sounds of flushing birds and the feel of a warm bird on a cold day.

I don't think that my memory of hunts is any sharper than that of other hunters. The connection between hunting and memory is strong in most of us. Perhaps it dates back to the first hunters who gathered around the campfire to eat their game and share the details of successful hunts.

Experience and memory were as important as physical ability for those primitive hunters. Given the millennia through which people have hunted, it's not surprising that memories of hunts are hard-wired into our brains more securely than PIN numbers.

Today, modern hunters often replay memories of hunts in front of campfires, at hunting camps, in local diners and in hunting journals. Those memories enrich our lives, but we also can use them to make our hunts more successful.

For quail hunters, it's valuable to remember where we found coveys of birds in the past. Quail coveys typically occupy a home range of 100 acres. Where habitat

is managed expressly for them, their home range can shrink to as little as 20 acres. It amazes me, though, how many times I find coveys within 100 yards of where I found them on previous hunts. They can be real "homebodies" if not disturbed too often.

Of course, you can't count on finding a covey in the same patch of cover every time, but a memory of past covey locations helps you hunt more efficiently. Some hunters who repeatedly find coveys in the same locales even name them using convenient landmarks, such as the "old barn covey" or the "blackberry-hell covey."

In addition to mentally filing away covey locations, it helps to remember where the birds go when flushed.

Failing to relocate the birds after a covey rise, I sometimes sit down and wait in the general vicinity to see whether the birds start calling. Not only do I get another chance at the birds that day, but next time I flush that covey, I'll have a better idea of where to look for them.

I was surprised to learn that a covey I hunted in a bottom of the Missouri River was flying across a levee (after I lost sight of them) and landing in a band of cottonwoods along the river. Those birds passed over plenty of good brush and grass cover to get to those trees. I didn't have much luck hitting them in the dense timber, but at least I could locate the flushed covey on future hunts.

If faced with a similar situation, you could alter your direction of approach to force the birds to flush to a different area, but there is no guarantee that the birds won't defy your best efforts to push them somewhere they don't want to go.

The circular, tail-to-tail, night-roosting pattern of quail produces another clue to areas used by coveys:

piles of droppings. These often are found in good cover such as weedy fields or in areas with shrubby cover (though usually not under a tree canopy).

Roost piles can be good places to hunt early or late in the day, when birds are near their roost site.

Whether you find birds in

the area or not, a fresh roost pile is proof positive that they are there somewhere. It always lightens my heavy gun a bit to see such a positive sign, especially after a lot of walking without other encouragement. I try to remember those spots.

Other subjects for your memory bank are water sources and hazards for the hunter or the hunting dog.

While I can pull up to an ATM and not remember the four-digit PIN number I used a few days before, I can recall for years the exact spots where I flushed a pheasant or a covey of quail.



I carry water with me, but when I need it the most, in warmer weather, it's hard to carry enough for myself and my dog. Plan your routes to include water sources for the dog and you can save the canteen water for yourself.

Hazards to remember include heavy patches of prickly plants, such as sand burs and cockleburrs. These are less a problem for me than for my dog because the burs don't stick in my feet, and my hunting clothes shed cockleburs more easily than her long coat. If I remember where those plants grow, I usually can skirt the worst trouble. I just hope we're not dodging coveys, too.

Other natural hazards include steep bluffs, deepwater stretches of streams, or downed timber concealed in tall grasses.

A general decline in quail over the last 30 years may leave you wondering if you can find an area that supports a huntable quail population. Although the overall landscape contains fewer acres well-suited to quail, there are pockets of good habitat where hunters can find success. Your memories of quail-rich areas you've hunted before can help you identify characteristics to look for as you search for new areas to hunt.

Many conservation areas are managed for quail habitat, but recent weather history, hunting pressure,

adjacent land use and other factors can influence the number of quail on the area. If you own land, you can incorporate quail-friendly management into your landscape by reproducing what you've seen where quail were plentiful, and by obtaining quail-management recommendations from your local Conservation Department office.

Through repeated visits to a productive area, familiarity with the land should make your hunts more satisfying. Instead of wandering an unknown landscape in search of good habitat, you'll be checking sites that held game in the past.

You'll find your sense of direction—not really a sense so much as a familiarity with the land—will improve as you learn the area's landmarks. What you remember of past experiences in the area will mingle with your new experiences to form a bond with the place. You may even feel something akin to what our primitive hunting ancestors felt when they hunted the lands that were their home.

With a little luck, you'll find more game, and your memories of hunting success will accumulate. After all, it's the quest for memories of successful hunts that draws us back into the field, more so than meat for the table. ▲

CHECK STATIONS

Looking back while moving forward with Telecheck.

by Thomas M. Strother III and Lonnie Hansen

The trip to the check station after a successful deer or turkey hunt has long been a tradition in Missouri.

Most hunters didn't mind checking their harvest, because they recognized how important it is to collect data for better deer and turkey management and to keep tabs on the number of animals taken.



Using check stations (right) often meant long drives after the hunt. The new Telecheck system allows hunters to check their deer and turkey by telephone (above) or Internet.





Check stations also became the primary gathering places for the public to see harvested animals and for hunters to talk about their hunts.

Mandatory in-person checking of turkeys began with the inception of the spring firearms season in 1960 and the fall season in 1978. Except from 1980 to 1985, when mail-in reporting was allowed, archery hunters also had to bring their turkeys into check stations.

The history of checking deer is more complicated. The first modern deer season was in 1944. Although



Wildlife researchers weigh a deer during the first years of mandatory checking.

there were “weighing” stations, in-person checking was not required unless a deer was to be divided among hunters. In this case, the carcass had to be stamped by a Department of Conservation representative. This procedure was maintained through 1950.

Hunters could first take antlerless deer in 1951, and that’s when we first required mandatory in-person checking of deer. From 1951 to 1958 (except for 1954) all deer had to be taken to a check

Because it is inconvenient and expensive—especially with rising gas prices—for hunters to transport deer or turkeys to check stations, the Department has looked for alternatives to in-person checking.

station or checked by a Conservation Department representative.

Between 1959 and 1968, we required in-person checking in some years, but not in others. However, from 1968 to 2003, all deer taken during the firearms deer seasons had to be checked in person. Except from 1980 to 1985, the same was true for the archery season.

Starting in 2004, all hunters during the fall firearms turkey season and all landowners during both archery and firearms deer seasons could check their game by calling a toll-free number. All spring turkey hunters in 2005 also could use the new Telecheck system, though check stations remained open.

In-person checking of deer and turkeys has benefited management of these important game animals. Deer and turkey harvest information has been the basis for setting regulations through the years. Data collected

usually included total numbers taken, as well as the age and sex ratio of the animals.

At selected check stations, we collected additional biological information. For deer, this included recording reproductive rates, weight, age, antler development and parasites. We also collected blood samples to check for disease.



MDC FILE PHOTOS

Check stations provided biological data about deer that can easily be collected from meat processors.



Turkey hunters had to check their harvest starting with the first spring firearms turkey season in 1960.

For turkeys, we have collected data on weight, spur length and parasites, and we've taken blood and tissue samples for genetic assessments.

Check stations also played a role in helping conservation agents enforce the Wildlife Code.

For example, agents have identified violators bringing illegally taken deer or turkeys to check stations by reviewing check station records. We also have used forensic methods to determine time and manner of death for animals brought to check stations.

Because it is sometimes inconvenient and expensive—especially with rising gas prices—for hunters to transport deer or turkeys to check stations, the Department has looked for alternatives to in-person checking.

We have considered a variety of methods such as field bag checks, voluntary checking, mail-in report forms, random mail surveys and others, but the costs,

lack of satisfactory harvest information and enforcement of hunting regulations made mandatory in-person checking the only workable option.

In the fall of 2003, however, we began to evaluate what we call the Telecheck system. People who bought a firearms deer permit at selected vendors throughout Missouri were randomly assigned either to Telecheck their deer or to check their deer in person.

We found participants checked deer at the same rate under the Telecheck system as they did in person. The proportion of deer checked in each age class (doe, button buck or antlered buck) also did not differ between the two groups.

A similar evaluation during the spring 2004 turkey season indicated that the checking rate and reported sex and age (bearded hen, juvenile gobbler or adult gobbler) of turkeys did not differ.



Another study determined that ages of adult deer taken to commercial processors and of deer processed by hunters were similar. This meant we could collect representative biological data at commercial processing sites.

Telecheck also was popular with everyone in the survey. Hunters liked how it made it easy to check animals.

Based on these positive results, the Conservation Commission decided to implement Telecheck for all deer and turkey hunting seasons beginning in the fall of 2005.

TELECHECK AT WORK

As with check stations, once an animal is harvested, the immediate tagging requirement of the animal with the transportation tag portion of the permit is still in effect. Once the transportation tag portion has been removed from the permit, the permit is no longer valid to be used again.

Hunters still have to check their deer or turkey by 10 p.m. the day the animal is harvested, and all deer and turkey must be checked before they are removed from the state.

The phone number and web site for checking are on each permit. Whether checking by phone or Internet, you are asked to provide the Telecheck ID number on your permit, the name of the county in which you hunted and some biological information about the animal you harvested.

To complete Telecheck, you must write the confirmation number provided to you by phone or Internet in the space provided on your permit and attach the permit to the animal.

The transportation tag and the permit portion must remain on the animal until processing for meat begins.

Test results so far indicate that checking compliance is at least as good with Telecheck as it was with in-person checking.

Telecheck also allows agents more time to perform field investigations because they do not have to spend time setting up and administering check stations.

END OF AN ERA

The era of requiring mandatory checking is still in place, but the mechanism is being replaced with a more efficient and cost-effective system. Yet, as with the end of any tradition, there are things that will be missed.

The majority of Missouri's check stations are small businesses. As they served hunters, they also contributed to our efforts to build and maintain the healthy wildlife populations we now enjoy. The services and commitment these businesses have provided has been immeasurable, and the Conservation Department thanks them for their efforts.

It's likely many hunters will revisit those former check stations. After all, those sites also were traditional stops for picking up snacks, gas and supplies. You might even run into some other hunters there. Some of them will probably be talking about the old days—before Telecheck—when everybody had to check their deer or turkeys in person. ▲



Check stations were natural gathering places for hunters. Even after Telecheck, tradition will likely draw many hunters back to businesses that hosted check stations.



Plant lovers go native, search for rare milkweed

Can someone who knows nothing about botany “go native”? Ask Kathy and David Winn. When the couple bought some acreage in Cass County a few years ago, all they knew was that pretty flowers grew there. Their interest in plants sprouted when they got involved with the Missouri Native Plant Society (NPS) and discovered that they were the proud owners of an endangered species.

“At first, they didn’t know bluegrass from an oak tree,” a fellow member of the Kansas City NPS chapter said. But on an outing at the Winns’ prairie in June the couple led a dozen plant sleuths in search of the elusive Mead’s milkweed (*Asclepias meadii*). They even located a nearly invisible seedling that had not yet produced its first distinctive flower.

The Winns originally intended to build a home on the site. They changed their minds as their interest in Mead’s milkweed and other prairie life blossomed. Now their passion for the pristine prairie has become the focus of their leisure time. For them, one of the best things about the NPS is the opportunity to learn from experienced, professional botanists.

Mead’s milkweed survives in only a few sites in Illinois, Iowa, Kansas and Missouri. It is on Missouri’s list of endangered plants and is classified as threatened by federal officials. The Kansas City NPS chapter spends one Saturday each June counting the rare plants at the Winns’ property and another nearby location. The outing combines recreation with serious conservation business.

Fanning out across the 22-acre prairie this June, the plant-loving group found plenty to look at while documenting a dozen Mead’s milkweed plants. Missouri evening primrose, spiderwort, compass plant, rattlesnake master, wild indigo, perennial phlox, prairie rose, coreopsis, foxglove beard-tongue and many other plants were in bloom.



David and Kathy Winn

A fresh breeze rolled waves across the living sea of prairie plants. Here and there an oval patch of flattened vegetation revealed where a deer slept the night before, and an area littered with empty eggshells marked a successful turkey nest. Field sparrows and meadowlarks serenaded the group, and those who found time to look up saw kingbirds, turkey vultures and red-tailed hawks.

If you are interested in outdoor fun with a mission, you might enjoy the NPS. Membership costs \$10 per year, \$5 for students. Information about the four Missouri chapters and a calendar of events is available at www.missouri.edu/~umo_herb/monps.

WORLD-RECORD CATFISH LIKELY LURK IN MISSOURI WATERS

An accident of geography gave Illinois bragging rights to a world-record blue catfish. It might just as easily have been caught in Missouri waters.

Tim Pruitt, Godfrey, Ill., caught the 124-pound blue catfish while fishing on the Mississippi River near Alton May 22. The fish topped the International Game Fish Association’s previous record by 2.5 pounds. Because Pruitt was fishing on the Illinois side of the river, the fish also was an Illinois state record. However, catfish know no state boundaries, and it’s a sure bet the record fish spent much of its life in Missouri waters.

Fisheries biologists, who get to see lots of big fish while conducting fish population surveys, say other large fish haunt the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. It’s just a matter of time until one winds up at the end of someone’s line, and that someone could be a Missourian.



PHOTO COURTESY OF TIM PRUITT

Women anglers to make a splash at Tan-Tar-A

It’s 5 a.m. and a group of women is eagerly preparing to make their first casts of the day. They are part of a new organization, called Sho-Me Women Fish!, that is helping women all over the state learn the joys of fishing. Sho-Me Women Fish! seminars offer instruction by experts in all fishing styles in non-intimidating settings. It also offers at least one major fishing get-together annually.

Between outings, members can share fishing experiences on the group’s online forum, “Reel Women Fish Tails.” The group’s next event is set for Sept 16, 17 and 18 at Tan-Tar-A Resort at Lake of the Ozarks. For more information, contact Sarah Holleran, 300 Florine, St. James, MO 65559, 573/261-0045, sholleran@shomewomenfish.com.



Most Missouri fish are safe to eat

Fish provide a good alternative to meat, and Missourians can feel good about eating most fish caught in the Show-Me State, according to the 2005 Fish Advisory from the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS).

The report, issued in May, says that pesticide contamination of fish remains low throughout Missouri. Lead contamination is a problem on two streams. Mercury contamination remains a concern statewide, but only for certain people.

DHSS recommends against eating:

- ▲ Shovelnose sturgeon from the Mississippi or Missouri rivers because of chlordane and PCB contamination.
- ▲ Sunfish, carp and suckers from the Big River in Jefferson and St. Francois counties because of lead contamination.
- ▲ Sunfish, carp and suckers from the Flat River in St. Francois County from Highway B to six miles downstream where it enters the Big River because of lead contamination.
- ▲ Sunfish from Big Creek near the town of Glover in Iron County due to lead contamination.
- ▲ Largemouth bass larger than 12 inches anywhere in Missouri for nursing mothers, women who are pregnant or may become pregnant, and children under age 12. Other Missourians may eat all sizes of largemouth bass safely.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency advises people to restrict consumption of other predatory fish to one 8-ounce (weighed uncooked) meal a week if no local advisory is in effect.

Advisory details are available at www.epa.gov/waterscience/fishadvice/1-meal-per-week.pdf and www.dhss.mo.gov/NewsAndPublicNotices/05FishAdvisory.pdf.

FOUNTAIN GROVE RENOVATION WILL LIMIT HUNTING THIS YEAR

Renovation work will reduce hunting opportunities at Fountain Grove Conservation Area this year, but the end result will be more and better hunting. Ongoing projects include replacing the decades-old water control structures and making improvements in Pools 1 and 3. The work will allow flooding of 220 more acres, increase the flexibility of water management and enhance habitat diversity. However, to accomplish these activities, the pools must be kept dry until construction is completed. Besides reducing wetland acreage this year, the work will restrict public access around construction areas. For more details about closed areas, call 660/646-6122.

Fed bear = Dead bear in Madison County

The death of a bear in Madison County in May demonstrates the saying, "A fed bear is a dead bear."

The 315-pound male bear broke into a shed at a rural residence to get at livestock feed. The owner reported the problem and took reasonable measures to keep the bear out. However, it returned and showed no fear when the man made noise to scare it away. The landowner shot the bear when it threatened a dog.

Bears are protected in Missouri. In this case, however, no charges were filed because the man had done everything required and had legitimate concerns for his property and safety. Had the bear not been killed, nuisance wildlife specialists might have been able to trap and relocate it.

Missourians can prevent similar fates for other bears by ensuring that livestock feed, pet food, bird seed and other food stuffs are inaccessible to wildlife. If you do have trouble, call the nearest Conservation Department office for help.



Black bear

Gettin' edgy with quail management

One of the first lessons serious quail managers learn is there is no such thing as permanent bobwhite habitat. The mix of cover types that quail need to thrive quickly reverts to other things when left alone. This is especially true of brushy border areas, which disappear in a few years if left untended.

One of the best things you can do to keep edge areas productive is to set back growth of brome and fescue. These hardy grasses survive in border areas, even when eradicated from adjacent fields, and can choke out beneficial weedy growth.

Controlling these grasses in brushy borders is a challenge because they are sheltered by shrubs. The solution is to wait until after woody plants drop their leaves and use an ATV-mounted sprayer with a hand gun or a flood nozzle on the end of a boom. Use herbicides recommended for brome and fescue and follow label directions for best results. Do this in the fall, when the grasses are most vulnerable, and the benefits will last three or more years.

Information about cost-sharing and other quail-management incentives is available from Conservation Department regional offices, local Farm Service Agency offices or from Quail Unlimited, 660/885-7057, bobwhite@iland.net.





Make waterfowl reservations Sept. 1–18

It's time to apply for hunting reservations at state-managed wetland areas. To apply, call 800/829-2956 or visit www.missouriconservation.org. All you need is the nine-digit identification number found at the top of a hunting or fishing permit or next to the bar code on your Conservation Heritage Card. Drawing results will be available at the same phone number and web site Oct. 1.

Two areas that have taken reservations in the past are not included this year. Ongoing renovation of wetland pools at Fountain Grove Conservation Area (CA) makes water-level manipulation impossible in pools 1, 2 and 3 this year. Hunting will be available on portions of the area not affected by construction, when and where water conditions permit. Call 660/646-6122 for information about current conditions.

The number of applications to hunt at Little River CA in the past have not justified taking reservations for this area, so it will not be included in this year's drawing. Hunting there will be on a first-come, first-served basis in designated areas as posted at the check-in parking lot. Hunters will check themselves in and out.

The daily drawing procedure tested last year at Eagle Bluffs and Otter Slough CAs will be in effect again this year. Under the standard drawing procedure, each party of up to four hunters draws one number, and parties with the lowest numbers get first choice of hunting spots. Under the experimental arrangement, each person in a hunting party is allowed to draw a number, and the party can use the lowest number drawn. The strategy is meant to increase the number of people who get to hunt each day by encouraging them to form parties rather than hunting alone or in small groups.

Young guns invited to Youth Waterfowl Extravaganza

Youths who want to learn how to hunt ducks and geese will have a golden opportunity Sept. 17. The Missouri Waterfowl Association and the Land Learning Foundation are conducting the Youth Waterfowl Hunting Extravaganza at Dean Lake in Chariton County. The event includes safety training, duck-calling instruction, demonstrations of retrievers, boats and decoys and realistic waterfowl shooting practice.



Lunch will be provided free of charge. Youths of all ages are welcome, but shooting events are open only to those 11 through 15 with valid hunter education cards. Shooters must bring their own firearms, but 20-gauge and 12-gauge ammunition will be provided. Each participant must be accompanied by an adult. Register online at www.mowaterfowl.org, or call James Worley, 816/941-7065, for assistance. The registration deadline is Sept. 10.

Come tell us what's on your mind

Conservation Department Director John Hoskins and his top state and regional staffers will hold another round of public forums. Each of the eight events will begin with a 10-minute presentation, with the remainder of the meetings reserved for questions from the audience.

"I really liked the interaction this format allowed last year, and I look forward to doing it again," said Hoskins. "We learned a lot at those meetings. I hope those who came last year come back and bring their friends."

Dates, locations and contact numbers for the meetings are:

- ▲ Northeast Missouri, Sept. 22 in Memphis, 660/785-2420
- ▲ St. Louis Region, Sept. 27 in St. Louis, 636/441-4554
- ▲ Ozark Region, Sept. 29 in Houston, 417/256-7161
- ▲ Central Missouri, Oct. 4 in Camdenton, 573/884-6861
- ▲ Kansas City Region, Oct. 11 in Sedalia, 816/655-6250
- ▲ Northwest Missouri, Oct. 20 in Cameron, 816/271-3100
- ▲ Southeast Missouri, Oct. 27 in Poplar Bluff, 573/290-5730
- ▲ Southwest Missouri, Nov. 8 in Springfield, 417/895-6880.

SUPER-AUCTION SET FOR OCT. 22

Trucks, SUVs, sedans, ATVs, boats, motors, office equipment, furniture, tractors, farm implements, cameras, air conditioners and a host of other equipment will go on sale Oct. 22 at the Conservation Department's Salem office. This year all the Department's surplus property for the year will be sold in one auction, instead of two as in the past.

Auction items are on display from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. the day before the auction and starting at 7 a.m. the day of the auction. The auction begins at 9 a.m. A complete list of sale items and terms of sales are available at the registration desk the day of the sale.

All property must be paid for on the day of the sale and before removal. Acceptable methods of payment include cash, MasterCard or Visa or personal checks with proper identification. For lists of sale items, call the Conservation Department General Services Division at 573/522-4115, ext. 3279 or 3283.



Missouri gets 9-day teal season

Waterfowl hunters who long for the whistle of wings overhead will be able to satisfy their yearnings during Missouri's early teal hunting season Sept. 10-18. The limit is four blue-winged or green-winged teal in the aggregate daily and eight in possession. Shooting hours are sunrise to sunset.

Six win Arbor Awards of Excellence

Three cities, a civic group and two individuals received Missouri Arbor Awards of Excellence from the Conservation Department and the Missouri Community Forestry Council for efforts to enhance urban tree resources.

Honorees include the cities of Clayton, St. Louis and Columbia, Springfield's Midtown Neighborhood Association, Carolyn Gerdes of Springfield and Chriswell Lentz of Kahoka. Awards are based on sustainability, use of sound management principles, effectiveness, size of area affected and innovation.

For more information about the awards, contact Justine Gartner, 573/522-4115, ext. 3116, Justine.Gartner@mdc.mo.gov.

Check out deer regulation changes on CAs

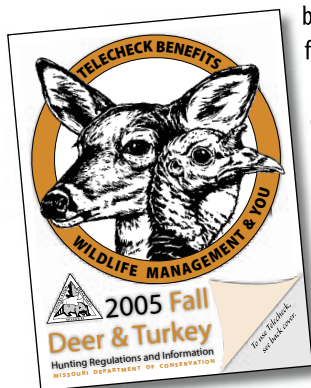
Maintaining healthy deer and quality deer hunting on conservation areas requires tailoring hunting regulations to each area. To meet that challenge, the Conservation Department has changed regulations on many conservation areas this year.

To help hunters find places for their preferred type of hunting, every conservation area where deer hunting is allowed now falls under one of six sets of regulations. The 2005 Fall Deer and Turkey Hunting Regulations booklet includes a table showing which set of regulations applies on every conservation area where deer hunting is allowed. However, public areas not managed

by the Conservation Department, such as national forest, are not included in the table.

The section on conservation area deer regulations also includes a list of 47 areas—mostly tower sites, accesses and other small areas—that were open to deer hunting last year but are closed this year.

The booklet is available from hunting permit vendors, or you can find the information online at www.missouriconservation.org/hunt/deer/deertuk/ten.htm.



Irresponsible ORV use is bad for everyone

Some of Missouri's most treasured natural assets are our streams, where we fish, swim, canoe, hunt and dangle our toes on sultry summer evenings. One threat to streams is irresponsible use of off-road vehicles (ORVs).

ORVs don't have to be destructive, especially if driven responsibly in appropriate areas. However, when driven across or through streams, ORVs destroy animal habitat and stream-side vegetation. Irresponsible ORV use inevitably increases erosion, which makes streams less attractive, contributes to muddy water and damages neighboring land.

PIGEON PROBLEM TURNS TO FALCON FASCINATION

Sometimes problems are adventures in disguise. Consider the case of David Childers and Associated Electric Cooperative's New Madrid Power Plant. Five years ago, the materials management supervisor was looking for a way to control pigeons at the power plant. His supervisor suggested attracting peregrine falcons.

Childers was intrigued. He built a falcon nest box and mounted it on the power plant's emissions stack 27 stories above ground. The box remained empty for three years, so last year Childers got help from the Conservation Department. He got necessary permits and bought four peregrine falcon chicks from a breeder.

Childers, several coworkers and New Madrid County Conservation Agent Rodney Ivie put them in a "hack box" atop one of the power-plant buildings. Thirty days later, the falcons were ready for freedom. Within 24 hours, the falcons took wing. Before long, they were doing what they were brought in to do, making the power plant an unattractive place for pigeons.

Eventually, all four falcons left, and none have returned. Associated Electric continues to support the program, however. Childers and his team raised four more falcons this year, and they have high hopes that one of the eight eventually will come back to raise a family.

What began as a suggestion to help control an over-population of pest pigeons has become a five-year adventure into wildlife conservation. Work will never be the same for Associated Electric workers, who now watch the sky around the New Madrid Power Plant with a new sense of wonder.



Outdoor Calendar

Hunting

	open	close
Common Snipe	9/1/05	12/16/05
Coyotes	5/9/05	3/31/06
Crow	11/1/05	3/3/06
Deer		
Archery	9/15/05	11/11/05
	11/23/05	1/15/06
Urban Counties (antlerless only)	10/7/05	10/10/05
Youth	10/29/05	10/30/05
November	11/12/05	11/22/05
Muzzleloader	11/25/05	12/4/05
Antlerless	12/10/05	12/18/05
Dove	9/1/05	11/9/05
Furbearers	11/15/05	2/15/06
Groundhog	5/9/05	12/15/05
Pheasant		
North Zone	11/1/05	1/15/06
Southeast Zone	12/1/05	12/12/05
Quail	season dates available in next issue or see www.missouriconservation.org/seasons	
Rabbits	10/1/05	2/15/06
Ruffed Grouse	10/15/05	1/15/06
Sora and Virginia Rails	9/1/05	11/9/05
Squirrels	5/28/05	2/15/06
Teal (sunrise to sunset)	9/10/05	9/18/05
Turkey, archery	9/15/05	11/11/05
	11/23/05	1/15/06
Turkey, fall firearms	10/1/05	10/31/05
Woodcock	10/15/05	11/28/05

Fishing

Black Bass (most southern streams)	5/28/05	2/28/06
Bullfrog	sunset	midnight
	6/30/05	10/31/05
Gigging nongame fish	9/15/05	1/31/06
Trout Parks	3/1/05	10/31/05

Trapping

Beaver	11/15/05	3/31/06
Furbearers	11/15/05	2/15/06
Otters and Muskrats	11/15/05	varies

see regulations for otter zones season dates

For complete information about seasons, limits, methods and restrictions, consult the *Wildlife Code* and the current summaries of "Missouri Hunting and Trapping Regulations" and "Missouri Fishing Regulations," the "Fall Deer and Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information," the "Waterfowl Hunting Digest" and the "Migratory Bird Hunting Digest." This information is on our Web site at www.missouriconservation.org/regs/.

The Conservation Department's computerized point-of-sale system allows you to purchase or replace your permits through local vendors or by phone. The toll-free number is 800/392-4115. Allow 10 days for delivery of telephone purchases. To purchase permits online go to <http://www.wildlifelicense.com/mo/>.

AGENT NOTEBOOK

Fall is near and many people are anxious to exit their air-conditioned homes and get outdoors to enjoy the cooler weather. Lots of folks are looking forward to hunting. Others may be just eager to take a scenic ride, stroll or hike through Missouri's colorful fall foliage.

Whatever your reason for heading outdoors, it is important to remember a few simple safety tips.

If you plan to walk through the countryside, remember not to dress in colors that make you resemble wildlife species. If you wear hunter orange clothing, no one should mistake you for game.

If you plan to go by yourself, let someone know where you will be and when you plan to arrive home. Take a cell phone with you. It could become your lifeline.

If you plan to be afield all day, remember that outdoor temperatures can fluctuate 20 to 30 degrees. Layered clothing, rain gear and comfortable footwear designed for our climate will help you cope with Missouri's changing weather.

Bring along plenty of food and water, as well as a lighter or waterproof matches. These will help you survive should you be stranded overnight. It's also not a bad idea to pack a small first-aid kit. Get in the habit of keeping these items in a fanny pack or backpack, so you'll never go into the woods without them.

Fall is a great time for outings. You'll enjoy your trips more if you go prepared. —Patrick J. Masek

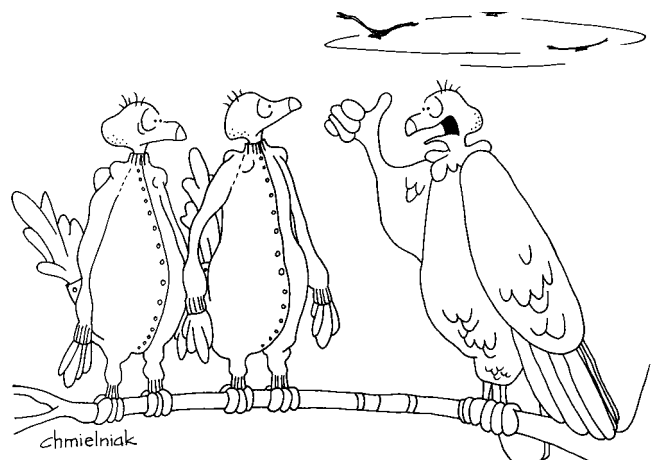


LITTER FACTS

Did you know?

- One-third of litter is fast-food waste.
- 28 percent of litter is aluminum.
- Disposable diapers take 550 years to decompose, and Styrofoam cups take more than 1 million years!

Missouri annually spends millions of taxpayer dollars cleaning up trash. Make a difference by joining No MOrE Trash!



"Hey guys, we **fly on** thermals, we don't **wear** them."



Join kids for a closeup look at Missouri's reptiles and amphibians.

Explore the history of the conservation movement in Missouri.

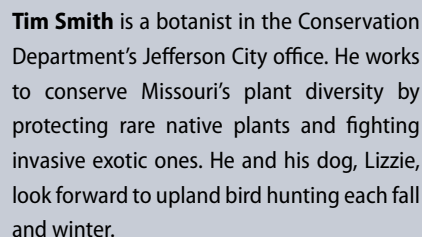
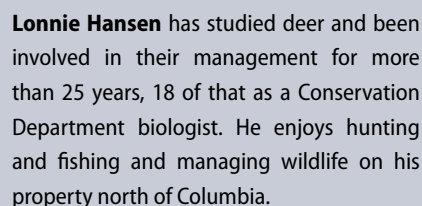
Just 60 years after they nearly vanished, Missouri welcomes deer, turkey and Canada geese Back to the Wild.

Join kids as they dive beneath the surface with underwater photographer Bill Roston.

From hunting and fishing to hiking and birdwatching... see how conservation pays it's own way in Missouri.

Brentwood BTN-10 Brentwood City Television	St. Charles SC20 City Cable
Columbia Columbia Channel	St. Louis Charter Cable
Hillsboro JCTV	St. Louis Consolidated Schools Cable
Independence City 7 Cable	St. Louis City TV 10
Joplin KGCS	St. Peters St. Peters Cable
Kearney Unite Cable	Springfield KBLE36/MediaCom
Parkville GATV	Sullivan Fidelity Cable
Poplar Bluff Poplar Bluff City Cable	West Plains OCTV
Ste. Genevieve Ste. Genevieve Cable	

Wetland Services Biologist **Rod Doolen** is employed by the Conservation Department in southeast Missouri. He works with the Wetland Reserve Program, assisting with restoration of wetland habitat. He lives in the eastern Ozarks with his family. He says he likes to hunt, fish, hike and canoe.





Sunrise on Teal Season

The sun rises on another teal season September 10th. These speedy little ducks can be a pleasure to pursue. The weather is often mild, and equipment requirements are minimal. All you need is a small bag of decoys and a quick aim for an exciting morning in the marsh. For more information on hunting Missouri waterfowl, go to www.missouriconservation.org/hunt/wtrfowl.— *Cliff White*